



Kentucky Craft Marketing: *A Model for Other States*

EDITOR'S NOTE: See the Spring 2003 issue of *Arts Across Kentucky* for a history of the Kentucky Craft Marketing Program.

PHOTO BY NANCY BRONNER.

The flame of the propane torch is a soft, shimmering ellipse of blue. It's only a little light, but it burns hot and steady. With a long, thin cane of bright red glass in my left hand and a thin metal rod in my right, I am attempting to twirl the melting crimson glass evenly into a perfect ball around the mandrel. No chance—like most others, it's a skill that takes substantial time, enormous patience, and dogged persistence to acquire. But the experience speaks to the attraction that craftspeople have to their hands-on work.



The opportunity to experiment with this craft and others and to develop an understanding of the techniques involved and the unwavering determination needed to become an expert is a facet of the Kentucky Arts Council's Craft Marketing Program (CMP). CMP was born in the early 1980s at the imaginative and well-connected hand of then first lady Phyllis George Brown and like-minded officials of John Y. Brown's administration. It capitalizes on the skills and traditions of a rugged, self-reliant heritage and an innovative, contemporary vision. Over the years, CMP has demonstrated that craft and craftspeople are an integral part of the Commonwealth's and our nation's past and that the concepts of heritage and economic development go hand in hand.

Live performances on the Kentucky Cultural Stage at the Market.



Hands-on children's activities at the Market



Designer Showcase.

The Craft Marketing Program is known for its annual Kentucky Crafted: The Market. The first Market was held at the newly opened Kentucky Horse Park in 1982. The Market, which focuses on artists who are interested in wholesale business, is one of very few such state-supported events. But CMP also offers its members and the Commonwealth at large other events to support and encourages the connections between craft, tourism, and business.

People who make their livings as artists don't often get to try new mediums, but the opportunity to do so can spark creative forces and lead to new and inventive

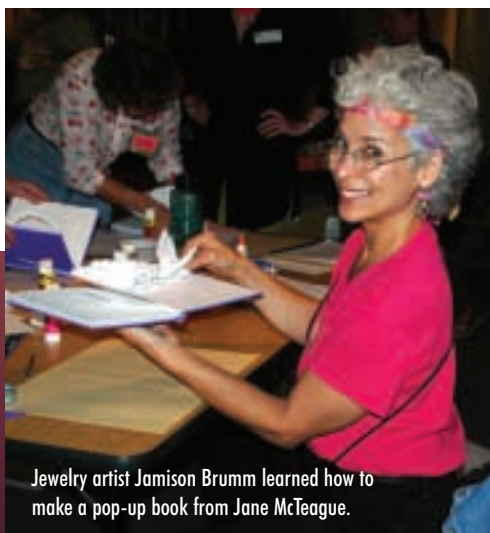


Bonnie Blincoe taught glass bead flame work to several attendees.

processes and products. CMP has been around long enough to know that artists must be challenged to stay at the top of their games. The program had been offering craft-business-related workshops for some time when it held its first annual craft conference in 1993 at Centre College. Crossroads and Connections was part of National Year of the Craft nationwide celebrations, and the participants were so inspired that they asked for an annual event.

The most recent craft conference, co-hosted as it is every year by the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft (KMAC), was held in Louisville this past August. At the conference, called Craftworks: Inspiring Creativity, metal sculptors learned how to craft polymer clay into colorful boxes, jewelry artists learned about the art of paper and pop-up book making, basket weavers got their hands elbow

Thomas Porter.



Jewelry artist Jamison Brumm learned how to make a pop-up book from Jane McTeague.

deep into clay and pottery wheels, and ceramists learned how to turn wood on a lathe. Glassblowing and flame work with glass beads were also offered. The weekend included the annual Rude Osolnik Award ceremony, this year presented to fiber artist and educator Lysbeth Wallace, and KMAC's Second Annual Art Car extravaganza.

Because the ongoing business-focused seminars were enthusiastically attended, CMP staff decided to alternate the content of the yearly workshop weekend, with a hands-on concentration one year and a "running a small business" focus the next. The last business workshop weekend—Outside the Lines: New Frontiers for Kentucky Artists—was held in Somerset in 2003. Attendees learned about trends in the marketplace, resource utilization,

servicing the tourism industry, and many other economy-related topics from regionally and nationally known speakers. These included Keith Recker of New York, whose specialty is product development; Gabriel Romeu, who conducted the CAD/CAM workshops; and Kyle Citrynell, a Louisville copyright attorney.

CMP has a deep commitment to the state's artisans and to a vibrant and sustainable craft economy. It also administers other programs of vital importance to the craft community. In addition to national promotion of Kentucky Crafts through the readily identifiable Kentucky Crafted logo, the organization has sponsored biannual trips to the New York International Gift Market for more than 20 years, offering invaluable business experience to selected CMP members. A recent venture is the development and promotion of the Kentucky Collection, a package of Kentucky crafts and products, including the kiosk, marketed as a whole to state parks and retailers. CMP also offers seminars to prospective members about wholesale and retail sales. It assists applicants with



Metal sculptor Dave Caudill tried his hand at polymer clay design at Craftworks: Inspiring Creativity.

PLATINUM 10 MEMBERS



Sharon Haines of Natural Accents has participated in many Craft Markets. Sharon is a member of the first Platinum 10 group.

GROUP 1

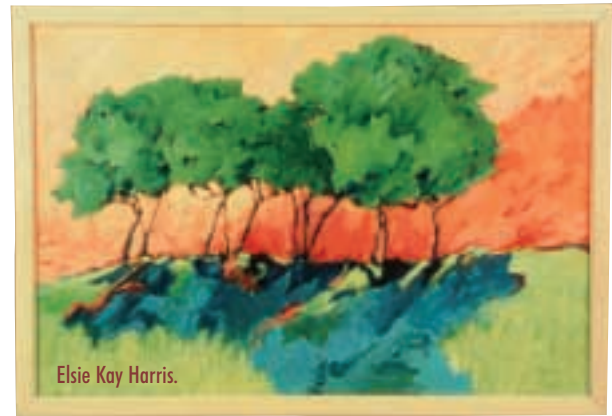
Alley Cat Pottery - Kristal Kokinda
Berea College Crafts - Peggy Burgio
Gastineau Jewelry - Ken and Sally Gastineau
Heartland Basketry - Jacquelyn Lawrence
Judy Geagley by Hand - Judy Geagley
Natural Accents - Sharon Haines
Shirley Jeter Watercolors - Shirley Jeter
SoapWerks - Kathy Werking
Watson Studios - Larry Watson
The Weavery - Harriet Giles



Then Governor Paul Patton chatted with Cynthia Cox of Crosswinds Pottery. Cynthia is a member of the second Platinum 10 group.

GROUP 2

Abby Glen Designs - Jamie Taylor
Appalachian Crafts - Mary and Robin Reed
Country by Liz - Liz Davis
Crosswinds Pottery - Cynthia Carr
Gail Cohen Designs - Gail Cohen
Heirloom Ornaments - Bob Diehl
Karen's Miniatures - Karen Scates
Pat Banks Watercolor - Patricia Banks
Weaver's Corner - Martha and Greg Richard
Wildwood Creations - Carol Shutt



preparing for juried shows and then conducts new-exhibitor orientation workshops for those choosing to participate in the Market for the first time.

Another innovative program offered to CMP members is the Platinum 10, created in 2002. CMP was interested in providing intensive consultation on product development and assisting those who wish to increase the profitability and sustainability of their businesses. A call for applications was issued, and a panel of retailers and CMP Kentucky Arts Council (KAC) staff selected the participants. Platinum 10 members must commit to a minimum of five days of intensive training in a year's time. In order to offer a wide range of marketing opportunities for these artists, CMP also partners with business support groups such as the Kentucky Manufacturer's Assistance Corporation and the Center for Economic Development, Entrepreneurship & Technology (CEDET) and coordinates opportunities with other CMP programs, like Kentucky Crafted: The Market, the New York International Gift Fair, and the Kentucky Collection.



Metal jewelry creator Robbie Moriarty followed the yellow brick road to the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft's Second Annual Art Car Weekend.



Fran Redmon (l) and Mary Miller, director of KMAC, shared the spotlight with 2004 Rude Osolnik award-winner Lysbeth Wallace.

KAC is a strong, active, dynamic organization that provides economic aid and creative support to the Commonwealth's artists and communities, and the CMP is one of its most successful programs. In a time of slashed arts budgets and shrinking organizational support nationwide, KAC and CMP offer shining examples of the value that Kentuckians place on meeting creative needs. The three R's are of vital importance, but we need the arts to feed our hearts and souls. 🌱



The Kentucky Craft Marketing Program's committed staff take a moment to pose in front of the Kentucky Arts Council's new (though temporary) offices. (Bottom row) Kim Leingang, Fran Redmon, Nancy Atcher. (Second row L-R) Beau Haddock, Vallorie Henderson. (Top row L-R) Marcie Christensen, Connie Hicks, Charla Reed.

Another program of the Craft Marketing Program, instituted in 2000, recognizes the contributions that longstanding craftspeople have made to the state and to the organization itself.

Kentucky Crafted Emeritus Award Recipients

2004 - Berea College, Sarah Frederick, Shirley Smith

2003 - Sally Cammack, Harriet Giles, David and Donna Glenn

2002 - Churchill Weavers, David Appalachian Crafts, Tim Hall, Kentucky Hills Industries, Red Bird Mission Crafts, Mary and Robin Reed, Melvin Rowe

2001 - Curtis Alvey, Dorothy Brockman, Lestel and Ollie Childress, Annie Hunt, Jack Johnson, Homer Ledford, Alma Lesch (posthumously), Rude Osolnik, Emily Wolfson

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